

REMARKS

Applicants thank Examiner Vijayakumar for his courteous and congenial telephone interview with co-inventor Dr. Jim Shelnut and Applicant's representative on December 2, 2004.

Applicants also thank Examiner Vijayakumar for withdrawing the objection to the specification, and for considering and acknowledging the information disclosure statement submitted on 06/21/04.

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-16, and 18-20 are pending in the present application.

Claims 2, 10, and 17 are canceled.

Claims 1, 9, 16, and 18 are amended. Claims 1, 9, and 16 are amended to include the subject matter of canceled claims 2, 10, and 17. Claim 18 is amended to change its dependency from canceled claim 17 to amended claim 16.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); b) do not raise any new issues requiring further search and consideration (since the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout the prosecution); and c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments were not previously made because the Applicants were unclear about the Examiner's position and reasons for maintaining the rejection of claims 1, 3-9, 11-16, 19 and 20 over Sonnenberg et al. until the telephone interview with Examiner Vijayakumar on 12/02. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-16, and 19-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. 5,800,739 to Sonnenberg et al. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Independent claims 1, 9 and 16 are amended to recite the subject matter of canceled claims 2, 10, and 17. Claims 2, 10, and 17 were objected to, and would be allowable if amended to recite the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have amended claims 1, 9 and 16 in view of this objection. Accordingly, present claims 1, 9, and 16 are patentable over Sonnenberg et al.

Claims 3-8, 11-15, and 18-20 also are patentable over Sonnenberg et al. since they depend from one of claim 1, 9, and 16.

Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1, 3-9, 11-16, 19 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly anticipated by, or in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly obvious over U.S. 5,800,739 to Sonnenberg et al.

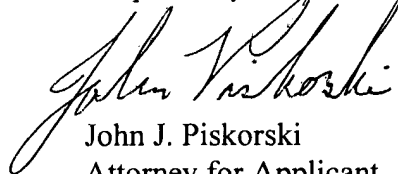
Claims 2, 10, and 17-18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims 2, 10, and 17 are canceled with this amendment and incorporated into their respective independent claims. Accordingly, the objection with respect to these claims is moot.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the present application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and allowance of claims 1, 3-9, 11-16, and 18-20 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner have any questions concerning this response or this application, or should he believe this application is for any reason not yet in condition for allowance, he is respectfully requested to telephone the undersigned at the number set forth below to expedite allowance of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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